

Guide to Making Sacred Space at Home

By



Made with  HIGH HOLIDAYS AT HOME

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Step 4: Add objects to your altar. Include objects tied to your past, like photos of your grandparents. Objects representing your intentions for the coming year. Objects inspired by the four elements (earth, fire, water and air) or by the five senses (sight, sound, taste, smell and touch). Beloved trinkets, family heirlooms, items from nature, favorite books or religious texts. Slips of paper in a jar with your intentions written on them. If you're creating your altar right before a Rosh Hashanah meal, you can include a plate of symbolic foods like apples, honey, beets, pomegranates, dates and carrots.

Step 5: Visit your altar. Throughout Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and beyond, come to this space in your home to bless your family, pray, meditate, mourn, dance, reflect, forgive, celebrate, heal and listen.

Art by Jessica Tamar Deutsch, <http://www.jessicatdeutsch.com/>

Blessings to Create Your Sacred Space

Contributed by [Temple Beth David](https://templebethdavid.com)

Source: <https://templebethdavid.com/haggadah/>

Verses and Blessings to Help Create Your Sacred Space, *Mikdash M'at*

1. Numbers 24:5

מֵה־טֹב־בּוֹ אֱהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

How good are your tents, O Jacob, Your sacred places, O Israel!

2. Birkat Habayit (home blessing):

בְּזֶה הַשַּׁעַר לֹא יָבֹא צֵעַר

בְּזֹאת הַדִּיבְרָה לֹא תָבֹא צָרָה

בְּזֹאת הַדָּלֶת לֹא תָבֹא בְּהֵלָה

בְּזֹאת הַמַּחְלָקָה לֹא תָבֹא מַחְלוּקָת

בְּזֶה הַמָּקוֹם תְּהִי בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם

Let no sorrow come through this gate.

Let no trouble come in this dwelling.

Let no fright come through this door.

Let no conflict come to this section.

Let there be blessing and peace in this place.

3. Exodus 20:21:

בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכָּר אֶת־שְׁמִי אֶבְרָא וְיִבְרַכְתִּיךָ

In every place where My name is mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.

4. Exodus 3:5

כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתִּיקָדֹשׁ הוּא:

Indeed, the place on which you stand is holy ground.

5. Psalms 121:8

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֵצִאתְךָ וּבֹאֲךָ מִעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

Adonai will guard your going and coming, now and forever.

6. Pirkei Avot 1:4

יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בֵּית וְעַד לַחֲכָמִים, וְהוּי מִתְאַבֵּק בְּעַפְרֵ רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהוּי שׁוֹתֵה בְּצִמָּא אֶת דְּבָרֵיהֶם:

Let thy house be a house of meeting for the wise, sit at their feet, and drink in their words.

7. The last line of the blessing said at Havdalah separating Shabbat from weekday can be used to “separate” this sacred space:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחוֹל

Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol.

Blessed are You Adonai, who separates between holy and ordinary.

8. The traditional prayer for healing can be used to “heal” a space too:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', רוֹפֵא כָל בָּשָׂר, וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת

Baruch atah Adonai, rofeh kol basar, u'maflee la'asot.

Praised are You Adonai, healer of all flesh, doing wonders.

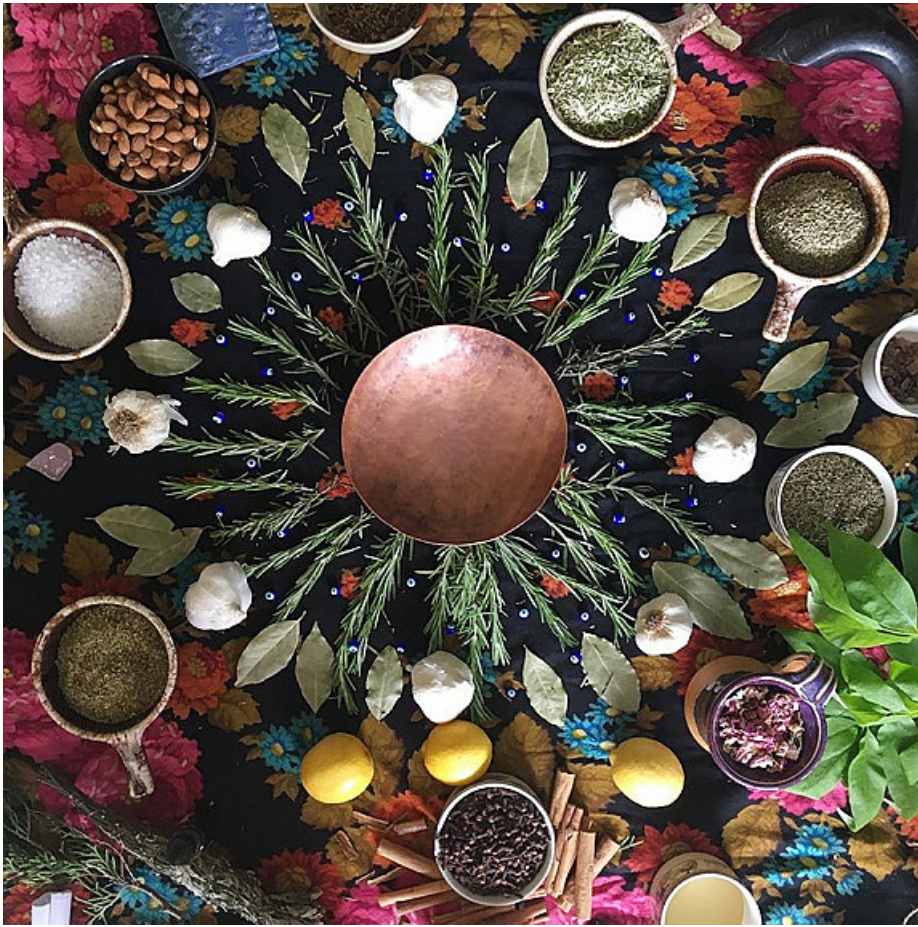
From: Hindsight is 2020 - A High Holy Day Communal Project by Temple Beth David

<https://templebethdavid.com/haggadah/>

Finding Awe in the Unravel: Part Two

Contributed by [Recustom](#)

Source: Dori Midnight: <https://dorimidnight.com>



High Holy Days in Pandemic Times: Finding Awe in the Unravel (Excerpt)
By Kohenet Dori Midnight, in collaboration with Elan/a June Margolis and
Annie Rose London

MAKOM KADOSH: Create Sacred Space at Home, Wherever You Are

Home as a Heart of Jewish Practice ~ There are some who believe the center of Judaism has historically been the Temple and that the conception of the home as a center of Jewish tradition is a modern invention. But, where were those of us who weren't in the room when the books were written, who weren't allowed in the Beit Midrash? Where were those of us who were exiled, fleeing, imprisoned, raising children, nourishing our communities, those of us who were healing the sick, those of us who were wandering? We have innovated so many home-based practices that have sustained us: from

kissing the mezuzah at the doorway to epic Passover seders to whispering prayers into braids of challah to opening our doors to the Sabbath Queen/Quing on Friday evening. In these moments, we priest/ess/xx our own connection to holiness and our homes become sanctuary. This year, in the absence of the physical temple, we are invited to conceive of a temple wherever we are. We are tasked with making our homes a *Makom Kadosh* – a holy space, and becoming temple keepers ourselves. We can ask: what is the essence of these holy days and how can I make this space and time a place to explore and honor that essence? Where will you place yourself for meals, self-guided rituals, services? Where do you want to do your Teshuvah work? What space in your home is ready to be transformed into a sanctuary? Consider: Your bed! Your bathtub! A spot on your floor! Finding a place outside that you visit often! A couch fort!

Mikdash m'at ~ Choose a space in your home to be your *mikdash m'at*, a miniature sanctuary, a holy place, opening to the possibilities of the temple in your home. Make it beautiful. If you haven't read the passage in the Torah where we are given instructions to build the Tabernacle, let these Femme queens share that it is magnificently decadent and lush: cedar and lapis and copper and crimson and shimmering unicorn skin. While that may not be your style, dedicate some time to making a space for G-d/dess/Holy One of Many Names to dwell in with you.

Suggestions for creating your tiny sanctuary:

- Make an altar
- Gather books that are meaningful to you (a machzor, books about spirituality and the high holy days, poetry books, your journal, books and zines about transformative justice and healing)
- Place a Shviti on your wall: A Shviti is a decorative piece of calligraphy found hanging in many synagogues. "Shviti" is the first Hebrew word of the verse, "I always set ADONAI before me" (Psalm 16:8). Typically, this sacred adornment included this verse written out in large letters along with other devotional verses in Hebrew or English including "Make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

Every Land is the Holy Land ~ Connecting to the land that we make home and ritual on is [complicated](#), painful, and charged as Jewish people who are scattered like seeds across the earth. For those of us who are not indigenous

to this land known as the United States, many of our ancestors came to Turtle Island as refugees, as settlers, as people who were stolen from homelands and brought here by enslavers, as Jews of mixed heritage, Black Jews and Jews of Color, as Jews who organize around ending occupation everywhere. Some of us came here as immigrants ourselves. We can honor the land we are on by learning about and [naming the tribes](#) whose land we are on, make [tzedakah \(donations/reparations\)](#) to Native Land Tax funds or [BIPOC land projects](#), and acknowledge that for hundreds of years, Native peoples have suffered and survived forced assimilation, mass incarceration, and genocidal policies of conquest.

Your Body is a Living Temple~ If you want to dive into some mind blowing talmud/quantum physics this season, you can study [Midrash Tanchuma](#), which has inspired some scholars to make the beautiful connection that our bodies are temples in a wondrous formula that equates the torah, the tabernacle, the temple, and our bodies. Divrei Beit Hillel comments, “On another level, the *Mishkan* (temple) symbolizes the human body. The beams which comprise the sides of the Mishkan symbolize the ribs. The goat-skin curtains represent the skin. The menorah symbolizes the mind. The k’ruvim (cherubim) symbolize the lungs, which lie over the heart, and the aron hakodesh (the holy ark) represents the heart.”

In that spirit, how will you tend to your body in these days and what does your body want to do for the High Holy Days?

Some suggested practices:

- Mikveh: honor transitions and invoke transformation in a ritual immersion
- Dip it in Honey: the traditional Hebrew greeting for the new year is: a good and sweet year! We don’t just want a good year, we want a year that is dripping with honey. We eat spiral challah, twisted with plump raisins, we pop pomegranate seeds into our mouth, and eat pastries doused in honey and rosewater. In Sephardi and Mizrahi tradition, we hold a seder on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, in which we eat symbolic foods for a delicious year, weaving a spell for a year full of pleasure and delight with each bite. We need to sweeten these hard times! It’s as if we are calling to the sweetness in ourselves, feeding our best selves with the golden nectar of the bees. Consider incorporating more sweetness into your days of awe- a ritual lick of a spoonful of honey each morning? Taking on a daily pleasure practice? How you can bring more sweetness into this time, into your year?

-Wrap yourself: consider wrapping yourself in a tallit, a beautiful scarf or other special piece of fabric when you sit down at your altar or to write, pray, or attend services. Some teachers consider the tallit a symbol of the wings of the Shekhinah, the Indwelling Presence of the Divine, a cloak of protection and light. (The new podcast, [Fringes](#), is about trans and gender non-conforming Jews and our relationships to tallitot and tzitzit.)

-Dress yourself like you are an altar: choose colors and fabrics and accessories that connect you to your high holy day intentions, dress up or down for HaShem/G-d/dexx, clothe yourself as simple or as fancy as you are moved. Dressing up even if you are staying home is an incredible vehicle for transporting yourself to the state of being you wish to occupy (#femmewisdom).

-Anoint with oil: This practice is edge play for many people, but if you're into it, you can learn more about anointing practices in temple times and create your own infused olive oil blend to use in ritual.

-Music: sometimes just surrounding ourselves with the songs and liturgy of the season while cooking, working, hanging out with our kids can help us connect more deeply and create a sacred space. And dance if you feel like it!

Make an Altar ~ Witchy queer Jews have basically been waiting all our lives for this moment: suddenly Rabbis across the country are suggesting people build altars in their homes. This is not new! Jewish people have been building altars for thousands of years! Before the Temple, [the ancient Israelites made altars in their homes](#), often in the kitchen, as a place for burnt offerings and stones. Our Shabbat table and Seder plate can be seen as a kind of altar. An altar is simply a table set to meet the Divine, a physical space that holds our intentions and prayers. As such, it can be sparse, or decadently full. An altar can sprout from virtually anywhere: a window sill, the center of your kitchen table, a crate in your bedroom, the top of your dresser, a moving box flipped over with a tablecloth on top.

Create Rhythm in a Time Out of Rhythm ~ Jews have a blessing for practically everything. Rituals support us in transitions, whether they are the transition from the old year into the new, or daily transitions from day into evening, sleep into waking, Shabbat into the weekday. Think about how you want to hold the transition from daily home space into ritual space and if you are choosing to tune into virtual services online, how to transition your computer that you use for work and play into your virtual sanctuary for

services and prayer.

Some suggested practices:

- Wash your hands (I like to have a little bowl of salt by my sink to rub into my hands for ritual cleansing and/or use a pitcher rather than the faucet).

Consider saying a handwashing blessing or a handwashing poem.

- Burn some cedar. Ancient Israelite Priestesses offered cedar smoke at the entrance to the Temple for cleansing. Cedar is a tall, coniferous tree, long held sacred for its medicinal, magical, and spiritual properties in Jewish tradition. Cedar is mentioned over 70 times in the Tanakh. Cedar is resinous and aromatic, it resists rots and insects, making it ideal for holding sacred space. Cedar helps build an energetic architecture of protection and clearing.

- Incorporate Havdalah rituals for transitional moments: light a candle, inhale the scent of spices, sprinkle some rosewater on yourself, and say the last line of the Havdalah blessing before opening or closing, entering or leaving your sacred space.

For the full reflection and rituals visit Kohenet Dori Midnight

at <https://dorimidnight.com/writing/high-holy-days-in-pandemic-times-finding-awe-in-the-unravel/>

Tishrei Altar

Contributed by [Recustom](#)

Source: Rebecca Missel



Honoring ancestors, finding sweetness in the present and seeking growth for the New Year

Contemporary Shiviti

Contributed by [Holy at Home](#)

Source: <https://yourbayit.org/contemporary-shiviti-by-steve-silbert/>



A shiviti is a visual tool designed to aid Jewish meditation, either as a prelude to liturgical prayer or as a contemplative practice all its own. ([Learn more at this shiviti page at OpenSiddur.](#)) The name shiviti comes from Psalm 16:8, *ה' לנגדי תמיד* / *shiviti YHVH l'negdi tamid*, "I place God before me always."

Steve Silbert has created a contemporary shiviti inviting the person who is praying to look inward.

Find more High Holiday liturgy from Bayit at: <https://yourbayit.org/holy-at-home/>

